

**Meeting Summary**  
**December 21, 2011 - Approved**

**Members Present:** Sanita Alrey-DeBose, Melissa Brown, Robert Caggiano, Joseph Capuano, Regina Dull, Jonathan Fink, Sean Gabaree, Michael Kallens, Sara Lappano, Zoe Lefkowitz, Tom Martin, Patrick Naehu, Dianne Whitaker

**Members Absent:** Chelsea Johnson, Larysa Kurylas, Chris Lindsay, James Mensah, Manuel Ochoa, Susan Petersen, Erin Roberts

**Guests:** Ben Gross, on behalf of Wheaton Patch; Marian Fryer, on behalf of the Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee and the Wheaton Citizen's Coalition.

**Call to Order:** The meeting convened at 7:05 p.m. Jonathan Fink, thanks for coming in midst of holiday season.

**Approval of October Meeting Summary** – A motion to approve the November 16, 2011 meeting summary was made by Mr. Kallens and seconded by Mr. Cagiano. The motion passed unanimously.

**Redevelopment Report** – Mr. Klein reported the following:

- Wheaton Sector Plan –The Planning Board voted to transmit the Plan to the Bi-County Commission who will implement a Sector Plan Map Amendment, which formalizes the Plan. This will likely occur within the next 2 months.
- BF Saul - The County and B.F. Saul are close to beginning discussions on Term Sheets. The County's position is currently under review by the County Attorney's office. It is likely that there will be separate General Development Agreements (GDA) with B. F Saul for both the County and WMATA. A GDA with WMATA will be a longer process as they are required to conduct a public hearing. as part of their process. The County is looking to March to reach agreement on the GDA. Geotech work, which will inform Term Sheets, is scheduled to commence with a couple of weeks.  
Progress is being made on proposed interim bus operations during construction over the bus bays – several options are being examined.  
Left turn access from Georgia Avenue northbound is being reviewed by the State Highway Authority for project access
- Westfield seeking reductions in parking requirement from 4.5 to 4 parking spaces per 1000 sf of retail space so that they don't have to build more parking in addition to exiting parking for Costco project
- Alliance Residential – The project might be on hold. The Redevelopment Program seeking additional information on the project's status
- Lowe Enterprises held a public meeting on 12/14 attended by nearby residents and building tenants. Lowe plans to renovate the building to 14 stories and convert it from a commercial office to residential apartment use. There is the possibility that office may remain at street level.

**Small Business Resources** – Mr. McGinnity Introduced Casey Willson of the Maryland Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to discuss possible resources available to assist Wheaton’s small business. Mr. Willson advised of the following:

- SBDC offers low-cost training programs and no-cost confidential counseling for businesses
- SBDC can assist small businesses to adapt businesses environments that are constantly changing.
- Smart, Green & Growing – represents fundamental shift - over last 5 years – in the businesses environment
- Small businesses can compete with national chains. They can react quicker than chains and know their customers better
- Banks won’t lend for new development projects unless tenants are already lined up. This puts pressure on developers to sign with large chains – known commodities. Small businesses are frequently undercapitalized and utilize unsophisticated business models. This makes them a risk
- Maintaining appropriate operating and profit margins are keys to successful business operations. Can small businesses compete with large chains than new development can bring? Yes, provided they have appropriate technical assistance, outreach strategies and innovative capitalization.
- SBDC’s starting point for business assistance is the current business’ status – Do they/Can they articulate and execute against their business concept?
- SBDC Strategy Considered for Wheaton Businesses: Gather merchants for topic specific seminar – tailored to audience
- Business Visitations/Checkups -thorough review of business operations.
- SBDC has established long-term counseling relationships in Montgomery County, including a bi-lingual counselor

**Housing Policy Letter** - The Planning & Visioning Subcommittee met with DHCA Director Rick Nelson The department is reviewing the current County Housing policy and is seeking public comment. A key issue is accessory apartments, both by right and special exception. The Subcommittee drafted a letter commenting on the issue. After discussion, Mr. Naehu made a motion to send the letter, which Mr. Gabaree seconded. The motion was approved unanimously by the committee. The letter highlighting the following:

- WRAC believes that Wheaton will continue to grow as a mixed-use, transit-oriented area. Residential and commercial development should be in close proximity, with the highest density near Wheaton’s metro station (“Wheaton Metro”).
- WRAC supports the continued redevelopment of new high-density housing near Wheaton Metro and the Westfield Wheaton mall, as this provides an easy connection to jobs, schools, shopping, recreation, and other leisure activities.
- WRAC recognizes, as good public policy, that greater residential density should be permitted in areas close to the Wheaton Metro. WRAC believes, as well, that in appropriate residential areas Wheaton should have more diverse types of housing, in terms of the type, size, and affordability of units.

The permitting process for special exceptions to zoning ordinances should be expedited for housing that meets strategic objectives of affordability, environmental sustainability, and transit serviceability. For instance, areas near the Wheaton Metro that currently have one house per lot could potentially be subdivided to redevelop as townhouses, where appropriate. It is WRAC's position that residential zones in Wheaton should permit one parcel to be subdivided to allow a duplex or a triplex, by an expedited special exception process.

- WRAC also recognizes that accessory units in Wheaton, as defined by Montgomery County Code: Chapter 59-Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 26-Housing Standards, Chapter 29-Landlord/Tenant Relations, are often affordable housing units that increase residential density by allowing additional people, such as older children and the elderly, to live in an owner-occupied dwelling.

**BikeShare Letter** – Mr. Fink and Mr. Klein attended a public meeting on Nov. 29 concerning the County's plan to submit a grant application to the state to implement bikesharing in Montgomery County. The goal is 400 bikes at 50 stations throughout Montgomery County, including Wheaton. A recommendation was made that the letter prioritize recommended bikeshare locations in Wheaton. After a motion by Mr. Fink, seconded by Mr. Caggiano, the committee unanimously approved a letter. The letter highlighted the following:

- Bicycle use is playing an increasing role in our transportation mix, and the existing Bikeshare Program in the District and Arlington County are proving its viability.
- A DOT Bikeshare program in Montgomery County's Urban Districts an important next step in advancing redevelopment.
- WRAC fully supports bringing Bikesharing to Wheaton and has identified 7 sites with the first 3 having the highest priority: Wheaton Metro, Wheaton Library, Wheaton Regional Park, Ana Mendez University – Westfield Campus, Westfield North Building, Crossways Community, and Dennis Avenue Health Center.

### **Subcommittee Reports**

- Economic Development – Mr. Capuano advised of the following
  - WRAC's letter to the County Executive regarding the Coalition for Fair Redevelopment was revised by the subcommittee and sent, based on the recommendations made at the November WRAC meeting
  - Arranged for presentation by Casey Willson of SBDC regarding forms of assistance for Wheaton small businesses.
  - Planned future subcommittee meetings at various Wheaton businesses to better understand what Wheaton has to offer
  - Discussed perception vs. reality in light of recent negative publicity concerning crime in Wheaton. The subcommittee will arrange for the Police Dept. to attend a future meeting to learn more and begin to develop strategies to address the issue for a better understanding.
  - The next Economic Development subcommittee meeting will be moved to January 10,, 2012

- Planning & Visioning – Mr. Martin referenced the prior discussion in the meeting regarding the Housing Policy letter and advised that the next subcommittee meeting would be on the second Wednesday of the month, January 10.
- Project Review – Mr. McGinnity, on behalf of Ms. Petersen, reported the following
  - The subcommittee began reviewing the Wheaton Streetscape Standards. Last revised in 2002, the subcommittee is trying to identify what additions and revisions might be made. The Standards are under the purview the Department of Housing and Community Affairs. The subcommittee suggests that WRAC be the impetus for prompting DHCA review/Revision of the Wheaton Streetscape Standards
  - The subcommittee is exploring the possibility of touring the WTOP building as it is designated as an historic site.
  - Ms. Kurylas, via the subcommittee, wants WRAC to consider the possibility of a lecture, possibly in Spring, on historically significant buildings in Wheaton by University of Maryland Professor Isabel Gournee

**GreenWheaton Update** – Ms Alrey-DeBose reported the following:

- Presentation on the trends in indoor and outdoor lighting and the phase out of incandescent light bulbs and the new energy efficient bulbs was held at All Eco Center (2662 University Blvd West, Wheaton, MD 20902) at 7:30 pm on Dec. 20, 2011. – Ed Murtagh (GreenWheaton) was the moderator of the event.  
Items discussed:
  - Energy Independence and Security Act (ESIA) of 2007 requires that many general-purpose incandescent light bulbs become 30% more energy efficient by 2014. Starting in January of 2012, EISA mandates that 100-watt incandescent light bulbs will be phased out unless manufacturers improve the bulb's efficiency by the 30%
  - Sara Lappano (a local lighting expert and WRAC member) discussed trends in residential and commercial lighting, how to choose the best lighting for your home based on the different type of lighting color spectrums and the expected savings you can see from the bulb conversions.
  - Delegate Al Carr, discussed the State's dark-sky lighting initiatives and Wheaton's outdoor lighting. For additional information - Email [Edward\\_b\\_murtagh@yahoo.com](mailto:Edward_b_murtagh@yahoo.com) or visit [http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=cfls.pr\\_cfls\\_color](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=cfls.pr_cfls_color).
  - The Montgomery County law that places a five-cent charge on each paper or plastic carryout bag provided by retail establishments in the County to customers at the point of sale, pickup or delivery will take effect on January 1, 2012.
  - GreenWheaton is partnering with Brookside Gardens, Silver Spring Green and Safeway to present a free screening of the movie: *Bag It: Is Your Life Too Plastic?* To be held on Monday January 9, 2012 from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM at Brookside Gardens Visitor Center (1800 Glenallan Ave., Wheaton, MD) -
  - GreenWheaton's next Monthly Meeting – January 24, 2012, 7pm at the Mid-

County Regional Services Center at 2424 Reddie Drive, Wheaton, MD.

**Public Comment:** Marian Fryer, on behalf of the Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC) proposed that WRAC and WUDAC work in concert with each other on issues of mutual importance, citing the committee's discussion on crime and perceptions of Wheaton as unsafe.

**Motion to Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 9:04 p.m.